

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

CURRENT

SUBJECT: PLANNING FOR REDIRECTION OF SEWAGE DISCHARGE AWAY FROM
CANYONS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS
POLICY NO.: 400-14
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 22, 2002

BACKGROUND:

Historically, the City's sewer lines were constructed in canyons in certain areas of the City to take advantage of gravity flow. Of the 2,850 miles of sewer lines in the City, approximately 320 miles are currently situated in the City's canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands. Many sewers in canyons are currently inaccessible, making regular inspection, maintenance, and cleaning difficult. To effectively maintain the existing sewer lines, the Metropolitan Wastewater Department (MWWD) must gain access to the sewer mains located in the canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands, many of which contain highly sensitive ecosystems.

In February 2000, the Natural Resources and Culture Committee (NR&C) of the San Diego City Council organized a City-Wide Task Force to assist the City in developing a city-wide policy(s) for operating, maintaining, and accessing a sewer collection system where environmental health and public safety are protected and impacts to San Diego's urban canyons are eliminated or minimized. A 33-member City-Wide Canyon Sewer Maintenance Task Force was formed, including representation from the City of San Diego, other governmental agencies, environmental organizations, and community groups throughout the City. On March 28, 2001, the City-Wide Canyon Sewer Maintenance Task Force gave their final report and presentation expressing their proposed policies and other related recommendations to the NR&C Committee.

One of the alternatives for gaining access to sewer facilities that are located in canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands is to relocate those sewer facilities out of those canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands to more accessible locations. There are, however, cost issues and community impacts that should be considered when deciding to relocate a sewer facility. The City-Wide Canyon Sewer Maintenance Task Force explored and analyzed those issues and provided recommendations in its report on how to incorporate those issues into the decision making process of when to relocate sewer facilities and when not to.

Often, to redirect sewage flow away from canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands, it is necessary to redirect private sewer laterals away from the existing sewer facilities located in the canyons to an existing or proposed sewer facility located in City streets or other accessible locations. Also, redirecting private sewer laterals may create a situation where it is necessary to install a pump system to the private sewer lateral. This situation may arise because the elevation of the private sewer lateral may be lower than the elevation of the existing or proposed sewer main in the street or other accessible location.

This policy incorporates many of the Task Force's recommendations regarding the redirection of sewer flow from canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands.

PURPOSE:

To establish a feasibility and planning framework for the redirection of sewage discharge away from canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands, including: i) a procedure that the City shall use to determine when to redirect sewer flow from canyons or other environmentally sensitive lands; and ii) parameters that the City shall use when interacting with property owners who will be required to install a pump as a result of redirection of sewer flow from canyons or other environmentally sensitive lands. Any subsequent actions taken pursuant to this Policy will be subject to environmental review.

DEFINITIONS:

1. Individual Lateral Pump:

Individual Lateral Pump means a pump used to direct sewage from a lateral located on private property to the operating sewer main.

2. Property Owner:

Property Owner means the person or entity who has legal ownership of private property affected by Redirection of Flow and who is required to use an Individual Lateral Pump in order to maintain sewer service in the City of San Diego.

3. Redirection of Flow:

Redirection of Flow means the decision by the City to abandon sewer main(s) located in canyons or other environmentally sensitive lands and to redirect sewer flow into existing or newly proposed mains in streets or other accessible locations.

4. Cost-Benefit Analysis:

Cost-Benefit Analysis means the procedure used to assist in determining when Redirection of Flow should be implemented.

5. Stakeholders:

Stakeholders means private property owners, groups, and individuals affected by Redirection of Flow. It includes community planning groups and residents in or adjacent to the project area.

POLICY:

When planning for future projects, the City shall make Redirection of Flow a priority. To assist in determining when to redirect sewer flow, a Cost-Benefit Analysis shall be conducted by the appropriate entity responsible for the project and shall include both quantitative and qualitative costs and benefits of alternatives. The Cost-Benefit Analysis shall consider the life cycle cost of the alternatives. The Cost-Benefit Analysis shall be conducted during the early design stages of the project. When estimating the cost to maintain sewer facilities in canyons or other environmentally sensitive lands, the cost of the increased risk of a sewage spill occurring and the cost of the impacts to the canyon habitat resulting from necessary canyon access shall be considered. When the City determines that the risk of a sewer spill occurring and the impacts to canyon or other environmentally sensitive habitat are high, the estimated cost for maintaining sewer facilities located in canyons should be increased by thirty-five percent (35%).

Financial concerns shall not be the only methodology used to determine the feasibility of Redirection of Flow. Environmental analysis will be a part of the feasibility analysis. In addition, City staff shall involve Stakeholders and solicit community input as an integral part of the decision-making process.

If the City determines that Individual Lateral Pumps are necessary to implement a Redirection of Flow sewer project, the City may provide and install Individual Lateral Pumps with City Council approval. If the City provides and installs an Individual Lateral Pump, the Property Owner will own and be responsible for maintenance of the Individual Lateral Pump. In addition, the City and the Property Owner must enter into an appropriate written agreement which must be recorded in the Office of the County Recorder as an agreement affecting real property. Further, the City should provide comprehensive informational resources regarding pump ownership and maintenance to the Property Owner. City staff shall work with the Property Owner and the City Attorney's Office as appropriate to accomplish these purposes.

When it is determined by the City that an Individual Lateral Pump is justified, the City should obtain and install a high quality pump, as determined by the City, with a manufacturer's warranty of five years if available. Further, the City may determine that a one-time lump sum payment to the Property Owner for estimated maintenance costs of the pump over its projected life is appropriate.

Any specific action or course of action taken in accordance with this Policy will be subject to environmental review.

HISTORY:

Adopted as R-295976 01/22/2002